

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Photographer Eric Meola Captures Tornado Alley's Epic Beauty

New York, NY.

Driving 500 miles a day with a van of storm chasers for weeks on end, photographer Eric Meola makes images of the epic beauty of tornadoes, storms and "supercells" that erupt each spring above America's Great Plains.

Meola's photographs of tornadic weather are an exploration of the ephemeral beauty of storms that is seldom seen due to the vast destruction during tornado season. "As a group of chasers, you get a weather briefing each morning before heading out for the chase. And in the numbers, graphs, and symbols you begin to understand just how insignificant we are," he says, adding that "I've always loved the flat, open prairie. I began photographing storms several years ago when I decided to spend time in 'tornado alley' and see if there was another visual side to the grey, rain-wrapped funnels that wreak havoc. As spring approaches, I'm restless with a need to get out to the middle of storm country where I'm part photographer, part storm chaser, part child."

Meola photographs the stark dichotomy between the fury of unforgiving nature and the exquisite light of tranquil, slow-moving "supercells" that hover at the back side of the storms as they move across the flatlands. Often, in the long night rides to a motel in some small prairie town, his notes echo the adrenaline rush he gets from storm chasing, and yet they also reflect the transcendent nature of the storms:

A thin line runs along the prairie's edge, defining the space between the sky above the land below—a boundary without a boundary, a place called infinity. Darkness comes, and with it the eerie green light of hail. The sky goes black, pulsing with flashes of turquoise, crimson and amber. You hear hail cutting through the trees, and watch it rushing towards you on the dashboard radar.

The first year that he chased storms, Meola was near Oklahoma City when a category EF5 tornado struck the suburb of Moore. On an afternoon off, he volunteered to sift through the rubble of several houses and came across wedding photographs and diplomas. "Everything changes in just a few seconds of raw fury" he says. "I've been all over the world and nothing feels as primeval as the storms on the Great Plains every spring. Yet storms have a surreal grandeur—they're alive, they're filled with light, they move, they change shape in front of you. Storm chasing pulls you in and it won't let go."

An exhibit of large-scale prints of Eric Meola's storm photographs from the Great Plains opens in midtown Manhattan on September 3rd at the Bernarducci Meisel Gallery.

"Storm Chaser" September 3rd through September 27th
Bernarducci Meisel Gallery. 37 West 57th St., NY, NY.
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